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Dilemma Motives in Contemporary Ghanaian Hilife Songs: Paapa Yankson's 'Woyer Anaa WoMaame'in Perspective

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Abstract:

In Ghana and Africa, dilemma motives and concepts constitute a large number of the folklore. Ideas related to dilemma motives and concepts like the dilemma tales leave listeners and audiences analyzing whilst making informed and critical choices presented among dicey alternatives. Given that these choices are quite difficult and may question the ethical, moral and legal thoughts of the individual; dilemma motives leave the audiences to judge the comparative skills and abilities of characters presented in the dilemma situation. The richness of dilemma concepts cannot be ignored when blended in the lyrics of African beats. An idea of African Rhetoric is indicating the critical thinking skills of the forbearers before the inception of written literature. Oral Ghanaian literature made use of dilemma motives to develop individual analytical skills and in effect arrive at the resolution of conflicting ideas embedded in woven choices. For instance, Ghanaian oral literature use dilemma motives to develop individual analytical skills, and in effect arrive at the resolution of conflicting ideas embedded in dicey choices. These choices are difficult such that it tends to question the ethical, moral and legal thoughts of the individual. Thus, leaving the audience to judge uses comparative skills and abilities of characters presented in the situation. In Paapa Yankson's song, the audience is presented with a dilemma, a husband is given a choice to save either the wife or mother who are both drowning. Using a qualitative approach, ethnographic research methodologies and elements of rhetoric, I thematically analyse the lyrics of the title and uncover how individuals familiar with the song solve this dilemma.

Keywords: Dilemma, dilemma motives, folktales, rhetoric

1. Introduction

A dilemma is a situation where a person is persuaded to choose between two or more conflicting options, neither of which is acceptable. However, if the individual is forced to choose between two or more options, then that individual is not in a dilemma; in this instance the individual is just in a confused or distressful situation. This mess is called a *dilemma*: a situation that challenges an agreeable solution. In literature, dilemmas form the central conflict many protagonists encounter. Many people face all kinds of dilemmas in life, and the choice they make can have long-lasting impacts. Dilemmas which involve human actions dealing with moral implications are known as ethical or moral dilemmas. Sometimes these dilemmas have even caused changes in society and history.¹ Common dilemmas include: *classic*, *ethical*, and *moral*.

A *classic dilemma* is a choice between two or more alternatives, in which the outcomes are equally undesirable, or equally favourable. The dilemma does not typically involve a moral or ethical crisis, but the person or character's life may change as a result of their decision. Some examples of classic dilemmas include deciding where to go for dinner on a first date:

Classic dilemmas are more than simple choices, because they usually prompt the person to think about the outcomes of the choices. As a result, a character in a story may find themselves on an adventure, in fear for their lives, or instituting change because of the choice they made in their dilemma.

An *ethical dilemma* arises when a person is forced to decide between two morally sound options, but they may conflict with the established boundaries of a business, a governmental agency, or the law. Some ethical dilemmas may involve following the truth versus being loyal to a friend; following the laws or rules versus having compassion for an individual's plight; and concerns about an individual person versus the larger impact on a community. An ethical dilemma differs from a moral dilemma because it very much involves following rules rather than one's conscience, although one's conscience can certainly move an individual to consider breaking the rules.

Ethical dilemmas are especially important in the medical and criminal justice fields, and in careers such as social work and psychology. In addition, most public servants have to undergo ethics training to address common dilemmas they may come across while working with the public. Recent advancements in science have also brought forward interesting and uncharted ethical dilemmas. Some examples of ethical dilemmas include a secretary who discovers her boss has been laundering money, and she must decide whether or not to turn him in.

¹Bascom, W. R. (2011) *African Dilemma Tales* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333033904_African_dilemma_tales/stats

A moral dilemma is a situation in which a person is torn between right and wrong. A moral dilemma involves a conflict with the very core of a person's principles and values. The choice the person makes may leave them feeling burdened, guilty, relieved, or questioning their values. A moral dilemma often forces the individual to decide which option he or she can live with, but any outcomes are extremely unpleasant no matter what. Moral dilemmas are often used to help people think through the reasoning for their beliefs and actions, and are common in psychology and philosophy classes. Some examples of moral dilemmas include the classic 'lifeboat dilemma', where there are only 10 spaces in the lifeboat, but there are 11 passengers on the sinking ship. A decision must be made as to who will stay behind.

While the study of dilemma motives in literature has attracted considerable attention among researchers, that of how the concept is deployed in the music scene is less investigated. For instance, Ghanaian oral literature use dilemma motives to develop individual analytical skills, and in effect arrive at the resolution of conflicting ideas embedded in dicey choices. These choices are difficult such that it tends to question the ethical, moral and legal thoughts of the individual. Thus, leaving the audience to judge using comparative skills and abilities of characters presented in the situation. In PaapaYankson's song, the audience is presented with a dilemma, a husband is given a choice to save either the wife or mother who are both drowning.

In this paper, I attend to the dilemma motives deployed in contemporary Ghanaian 'hilige' music. Specifically, I analyse how PaapaYankson's '*WoyeranaawoMaame*'² uses dilemma motives to engage listeners. Research continues to show that dilemma motives form a core pillar in Ghana's folktale and music.

Bascom (2011) further expatiates on the moral dilemma where he makes a distinction and establishes some types of moral dilemmas. There is the mention of Epistemic/ Ontological Dilemma. This involves situations wherein two or more moral requirements conflicts with each other and that the moral agent hardly knows which of the conflicting moral requirement takes their precedence over the other. In other words, the moral agent here is unable to choose any option which is morally right or wrong in epistemic moral dilemmas; one option must be better than the other just that it needs full knowledge of the situation. Ontological moral dilemma involves situations wherein two or more moral requirements conflicts with each other yet neither of these conflicting moral requirement overrides each other. This is not to say that the moral agent does not know which moral requirement is stronger than the other. He goes on to mention a self-imposed moral dilemma. This is caused by the moral agent's wrong doings. For instance, presently, some leaders are engaged in illegal mining popularly known as 'galamsey'.³ The quest to gain more mining from these illegal mining activities is chosen over the livelihood of the people living in these mining communities and the sustenance of greenery for future generations. The agent has the moral obligation to choose to protect the environment but rather chooses to make extreme profit whilst the lives of other people are threatened.

1.1. An Overview of Dilemma Motives and Concepts

One of the most famous literary dilemmas appears in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The phrase 'To be or not to be...', is quite famous. However, many are not aware that these words embody the central conflict of Hamlet's dilemma. Hamlet is comparing the agony of life, with the fear and uncertainty of death. While Hamlet is disappointed with his life, he is also scared of death, especially by suicide. He is frightened by what death has in store; it may be 'sleep', or it could be an experience worse than life. Hamlet's dilemma is to stay living unhappily, or commit suicide and await uncertainty after life. In *Silas Marner*, Godfrey Cass has many dilemmas that he is unfortunately never able to rectify. Throughout the story, he makes one bad choice after another, because of moral and situational dilemmas controlling his life. Godfrey's main dilemma centres on his secret, resented marriage to Molly Farren, an opium addict. The texts suggest that he was led into this marriage by his swaggering younger brother, Dunstan. Dunstan uses this information to blackmail Godfrey, and keep him away from his true love, Nancy. The secret becomes the centre of every problem in his life, and many dilemmas emerge from it. Does he escape Dunstan's power by divulging the marriage to everyone, and lose Nancy's love? Or, does he continue to court Nancy and lie to everyone, paying off Dunstan and Molly to hide the secret?

Some contemporary Ghanaian hilige music are popular because of some of these dilemma motives. In C. K. Mann's '*Matowaboa*', a moral issue is presented. The artiste narrates the love he has for his mother by virtue of the fact that she took care of him, gave him education and all that he needed to grow up to be a responsible adult. On this fateful day, the artiste heard a distress call from wife after dinner. His wife requested that he brought out a gun because a tiger was about to kill her. When he got there, the tiger gave him options which were, 'if you shoot me you would have shot your mother, if you do not, I will take your wife away and kill her.' In his chorus, he continuously echoed, 'So when I shot, I shot a tiger, I did not shoot a human being.' These are the little ethical choices one has to make in the world.

2. Statement of the Problem

The work seeks to unearth the existence of the use of rhetoric elements and dilemma motives as used by the forbearers even before the written rhetoric. The idea of imagery created in the scenario of the music and others to be discussed will serve as a proof to this assertion. Proof to the assertion that Africans equally have employed literary dilemma in oral literature to communicate important cultural lessons. It is assumed that rhetoric existed only during the time when it was documented or written. Africans who later got introduced to written literature, oral literature presented an opportunity to use some of these forms of orality. In storytelling, songs, naming of individuals and the practice of some cultural rites, the African has always been a storytelling entity. The words used in these narratives such as storytelling, riddles, work songs and tales had no difference to what was later documented as written literature. In the quest to develop

²'Woyeranaa wo Maame' poses a question of which literary means 'either your wife or your mother.'

³Galamsey, derived from the phrase 'gather them and sell'

the critical thinking skills of the African, the African had to use what was available to him/her. These were the basic which included the primary source of the use of language. It will be discovered that, in the song by PaapaYankson, 'WoyeranaawoMaame', there is much credence paid to relationship and family. The African believes that family is what graduates to the society. As even a brief survey of ethnographic literature reveals, kinship systems vary widely across African settings, with some societies defining family belonging and residence according to maternal relations, others according to paternal relations, and others some combination of the two.⁴Therefore, making a moral decision to choose a mother over a wife or vice versa is not a mere decision. Fortes (1987), reiterates that family and kinship must be prioritised in every decision making over spouses and mating partners.

'Accordingly, conventional wisdom in many African settings is that people should trust and prioritize obligations to kinship connections over mating connections.'

3. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to among other searches:

- Find out the whether the song under review possesses elements of dilemma motives and African rhetoric.

4. Research Question

The paper seeks to find a response to the question:

Do the lyrics of the song present the elements of dilemma motives and African rhetoric?

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1. Narrative Paradigm

This theory posits that people living within the society are storytelling animals, Fisher (1987). With this theory, Fisher (1987) established that individuals approach their social dwellings in a narrative mode and make decisions and further act accordingly with the framework of narrative storytelling.⁵Storytelling being one of the oldest forms of communication also tends to be universal; this aids in the concept that people are primarily storytellers which is the core reference of the Narrative Paradigm. It goes on to indicate that instead of using traditional logic, people are more open to judging the credibility of a speaker through narrative logic which analyses if their stories are well put together; that is to say that the story should have qualities of being coherent. In other words, there should be synergy. Apart from coherence, there should be some element of verisimilitude in order to ensure fidelity. Narrative logic here permits individuals who are not educated in oratory and persuasion to make judgments; therefore, allowing liberal democracy in language and speech practice. Reflecting on dilemma motives by way of relating them to narrative logic, it is worth noting that one does not need education in order to resolve this of oral art. In whatever language and genre, dilemma motives are universal and can be even existent in songs like the song text under review in this study.

5.2. Rhetoric

In rhetoric, a rhetoric device, persuasive device or stylistic device is a technique that an author uses to convey to the listener or reader a meaning with the goal of persuading them towards considering a topic from a perspective using language designed to encourage or provoke an emotional display. Aristotle's rhetoric made use of modes of persuasion. Of these modes, Rife (2010)⁶, identifies four modes first of which is the Logos. Logos, an appeal to logic using intellectual reasoning and argument structure such as issuing claims, sound reasons for the claims and supporting these claims. Followed by Pathos, which is an appeal to the audience's emotions often based on values. By influencing their feelings, the audience can be pushed to take an action, believe an argument or respond in a certain way. An appeal based on good character and moral attitude of the author of speaker is identified as Ethos. It involves persuading the audience that the author is credible and well-qualified, possessing desirable qualities that mean the argument can be trusted. This mode of persuasion may be emotions generated out of joy or sadness. Rife (2010), mentions Kairos as the fourth appeal which refers to timing. To him, Kairos, situate the success of an argument within the context of time and the frame within which an argument occurs. In other words, an argument may be accepted by the audience based on ideal surroundings and at an appropriate time. More so, an audience is likely to be receptive or not to an argument based on the suitability of an environment regardless of how logical, emotionally strong and level of credibility of that argument.

6. Methodology

The study focused on the 'hilife' song by PaapaYankson, 'woyeranaa wo maame.' Of this, the study dwelt on the dilemma motives presented in the song and resolution thereof. Being a qualitative study, the song texts were used as the unit of analysis. Using thematic analysis, the piece of work further analysed the rhetorical elements presented in the song. Moustakas (1994) argues that a human experience may be a phenomenon such as insomnia, being left out, anger and for the purpose of this work, the experience of being faced with making moral decisions. The inquirer collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for

⁴Radcliffe-Brown A. R., Forde D. (1950/1987). African Systems of Kinship and Marriage. London: KPI

⁵Fisher, W. R. (1987) Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value and Action. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press

⁶Rife, Martine Courant (2010). 'Ethos, Pathos, Logos, Kairos: Using a Rhetorical Heuristic to Mediate Digital-Survey Recruitment Strategies'. IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication. 53(3): 260-277

all of the individuals. The piece of work also employed the idea of phenomenology basing on the idea that, individuals in one way or another may have been faced with situations relating to moral decision making for the greatest good. The question the implications of dilemma motives, in PaapaYankson's 'WoyeranaawoMaame', I conducted an online focus group discussion with three gentlemen. The choice of the gender was because, the main character in the song under review who had to make the tough decision is a man. Of these three men, one is an up and coming artiste, another is a graduate assistant and the third is research fellow. Their task was to help question the relevance and impact of dilemma motives and considering the critical thinking abilities of the individual. The lyrics are captured in the appendix in Fanti⁷ and Pidgin as performed by the artiste in the original song.

7. Delimitation

The lyrics of the song is in the Ghanaian language, specifically Fanti. The artiste further did some part of the song in Pidgin. In order to keep the originality of the lyrics, the discussions will be done using the lyrics in their original forms with an explanation in English to make the discussions meaningful and relatable.

8. Discussions

The analysis will be discussed using the lyrics of the song. As the analysis advances, the study lyrics being in Fanti will be transcribed and translated into English. The analysis of the study will provide a response to the research question:

- Do the lyrics of the song present the elements of dilemma motives and African rhetoric?

In providing the response to the question above, the analysis will be discussed from three dimensions: Logic, Literature and Theory.

8.1. Logic

Here, I share my experiences as an individual who is faced with a moral situation to choose among two options. At a point in time every individual has been faced with an issue of choosing which one is the greatest good despite all odds. The choice I made when I was faced with the decision-making problem was to defy certain choices amongst the two options that I had. I can relate with the artiste when he poses the question in his song texts. To me it is a rhetorical question but it leaves much to be desired.

'Seekotowoyerna wo Maamedewogunsumuoo, ma nsudzehonrekoo

*Ebeyihonawoyeranaawomaame ah?*⁸

'If you go meet your wife and your mother, them dey inside water, water dey carry them dey go Which one you go save, your wife or your mother?'

He goes a long way to present the options and continues to add the reasons for which either option should be chosen. Having been in a situation where, I would ask questions to myself, I relate with the lyrics of this song. In deep thought and analysis, the artiste now to himself, sings his thoughts openly. These words obviously leave listeners and patrons of the song to think and make individual decisions should they find themselves in the same situation. Apart from my personal experience shared during the focus group discussion, the three participants equally shared personal experiences when they had to make some moral decisions in their relationship, family and even education. To them, they have had experiences when they had to make a choice between two options. This experience grants them a reason to relate with the song under review.

8.2. Literature

Referring to Bascom (2011), the choice the person makes may leave them feeling burdened, guilty, relieved, or questioning their values. A moral dilemma often forces the individual to decide which option he or she can live with, but any outcomes are extremely unpleasant no matter what. Moral dilemmas are often used to help people think through the reasoning for their beliefs and actions, and are common in psychology and philosophy classes. The song under study, presents the artiste thinking through the lyrics of the song as he tries to make a moral decision. It is clear that, he finds it a daunting task to choose which one to save from drowning. He clearly tells that the choice is not an easy one when he says:

*'Asemarakoroyi ah iyidzeasemarakoroyiah'*⁹

Already, he establishes that the situation in which he finds himself is an unpleasant one. The options are further explained in the subsequent sub-heading

8.3. Theory

With reference to the Narrative Paradigm by Fisher (1987), the study sits the focus of the lyrics into the theory. The theory explains that every individual is a storytelling being. Storytelling being one of the oldest forms of communication cuts across traditions. In the sense that it is; this aids in the concept that people are primarily storytellers which is the core reference of the Narrative Paradigm. For instance, there is the story of creation. This story is told from various religious perspectives. Traditional religion tells of how the earth was formed in different contexts. Christian religion attributes the creation story to God who formed the earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. Tales have been told of the existence of some natural occurrences of which the forefathers lacked scientific knowledge to explain the

⁷Fanti is one of the Ghanaian languages and a dialect of Akan. It is spoken by the people from the Central Region of Ghana known as Fante or Mfantsefo.

⁸If you have a choice to save your mother and wife, who would you save? The original text is in Fante and Pidgin English. The artiste first sings in Fante and then in the Pidgin.

⁹To wit, 'This is a serious case.'

reasons for which these natural occurrences. The artiste, in the midst of making these choices, presents his ideas and 'confusion' in a story. He begins by asking a question, he then continues to analyse the good deeds of his wife and then moves on to say those of his mother. To his wife he says:

'Woyeryewohokafo, ɔye wo boafɔ, ɔnye wo akɔ chapel dan mu oooakeye for better for worse

*Asekyerenyedeoyarmuo, ahɔndzenmuoo, bɔnwenmuoo, dedɛwmuoo, owumuoo, nkwamuoo, akwanyinara mu oo homakɔyehonambaako ... asemarakoroyiahiyidzeasemarakoroyiah.'*¹⁰

'Na your wife na your back man, naein bi your helper, you and ein go for church, you go make for better for worst

Na ein bi say whether you sick oo, you well oo, na sweet oo, na bitter oo, na death oo, na life oo, in every way oo, you and ein make one flesh.'

After establishing the first argument, he further presents that of his mother. He weighs among several options the reason for which the listeners should consider to save a mother. He refers to the nine months period of conception and birth.

'Wo maameye wo maame, ekɔsorbaase o wo maamearanye no maamebiinyihɔ bio maameyewɔ no korɛɛnona bosom akono (9 months) ne mu amandzehunu, ne mu kwadaanda, ne mu obreyi, oyisen wo ɔwo wo nso.

Aber a edaenumfoano no gyedewo ho andɔgyedɛensumpo wo maamenhudzeaoye ne ho, Maame ne yiemhyehye no, ndae aa ɔndaenso

*Sweet mother I no go forget u ara da.'*¹¹

9. Conclusion

I conclude that language has always existed before prehistoric times. The early users of language may not have had a formal way of documenting these forms of language and rhetoric. However, elements and traces of these forms are embedded in their forms of language usage such as through songs, storytelling and their ways of interpreting knowledge. As form of developing critical thinking skills, the lyrics of this song, 'woyeranaa wo maame', leaves listeners to equally think deep into the situation of the artiste. If decision is part of human life then certainly, one is bound to make an ethical decision one day. It may not be the same as the one presented in the song; it may be complicated than what the artiste thought through. In the end, it was clear who his decision would favour when he finally said, 'Sweet mother I no go forget u ara da.' In a very subtle way, his wife can wait, he will choose to save his mother. As in this example found in the lyrics of the song, the narrator of dilemma tales often ends with an explicit question or invitation to debate. Looking into the future, gender advocates may question the reason for which the decision must be made by a man. It may as well be a woman who should choose among her father and her husband. Music scholars may also consider the musical composition of the song itself owing to the fact that the genre is 'hilife' but the rhythm is salsa.

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Appendix

PaapaYankson

(Benjamin Paapa Kofi Yankson)

'WoyerAnaaWoMaame' (AsemAraKoro)

¹⁰In Fante the artiste explains that the wife is a helper, she has been married legally at church. The vows to live in good and bad times still holds, what decision would you make in the light of these?

¹¹In these lines, the artiste establishes the bond between a mother and her child. He refers to the connection built during breastfeeding. The sleepless thoughts of a mother when her child is unwell. Then he ends by saying he can never forget his mother.

Lyrics

Chorus:

Asemarakoroyi ah iyidzeasemarakoroyia (Asem aba oooo)

Asemarakoroyiahiyidzeasemarakoroyia (Menyahona ma obeyi me efir mu oooo)

Asemarakoroyi ah iyidzeasemarakoroyiah (2x)

Verse 1:

Seekotowoyerna wo Maamedewogunsumuoo, ma nsudzehonrekwa

Ebeyihonawoyeranaawomaame ah? (2x)

Iyidzeasemarakoroyi

Woyeryewohokafo, oyewobofo, onye wo ako chapel dan mu oooakeye for better for worse

Asekyerenyedeyarmuo, ahondzenmuoo, bonwenmuoo, dedewmuoo, owumuoo, nkwamuoo, akwanyinara mu oo
homakoyehonambaako ... asemarakoroyiahiyidzeasemarakoroyiah

Chorus:

Asemarakoroyi ah iyidzeasemarakoroyia (Menyahona ma obotutuagye me ooo)

Asemarakoroyiahiyidzeasemarakoroyia (Menyahona, Menyahona, Menyahonaooo)

Asemarakoroyi ah iyidzeasemarakoroyiah

Verse 2:

Seekotowoyerna wo Maamedewogunsumuoo, ma nsudzehonrekwa

Ebeyihonawoyeranaawomaame ah? (2x)

Iyidzeasemarakoroyi

Wo maameye wo maame, ekosorbaase o wo maamearanye no maamebiinyih bio maameyewo no korpeonona bosom
akono (9 months) ne mu amandzehunu, ne mu kwadaanda, ne mu obreyi, oyisen wo owo wo nso.

Aber a edaenumfoano no gyedwo ho andgyedensumpo wo maamenhudzeaoye ne ho, Maame ne yiemhyehye no, ndae
aa ondaenso

Sweet mother I no go forget u ara da.

Kai wombofraber mu ekedzibone ma wokawodoehona wo Maamedzeneabadaebedan lawyer ebedziwekyir,
dzaonyimponaoreka, dzaonyimponaorekadembreobotwetwaagye ne ba, okomdze wo a, obatannaonyimdza ne
baobedzi...

Na sendeayenyimpa ah aso aware naseekotowoyerna wo maamedensudzehonrekwaesedebeyihona?

Woyeranaawomaameahh

Iyidzeasemarakoroyi ah

Verse 1 (in Pidgin English):

If you go meet your wife and your mother, themdey inside water, water dey carry them dey go Which one you go save,
your wife or your mother? (2x)

Na big wahala, this one na big wahala

Na your wife na your back man, naein bi your helper, you and ein go for church, you go make for better for worst

Na ein bi say whether you sick oo, you well oo, na sweet oo, na bitter oo, na death oo, na life oo, in every way oo, you and
ein make one flesh

Chorus (till fade):

Asemarakoroyi ah iyidzeasemarakoroyia (Na wahalaooo)

Asemarakoroyiahiyidzeasemarakoroyia (Na big bigwahalaooo)

Asemarakoroyi ah iyidzeasemarakoroyiah (Me yedzen oo, me yedzen, asem aa wabayia aa)

Asemarakoroyi ah, asemarakoroyi, asemarakoroyi ah, iyidzeasemarakoroyiah